



LINCOLN CHAFEE

U.S. SENATOR

RHODE ISLAND

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CHAFEE SECURES \$200,000 TO IMPROVE TRUANCY COURT

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee announced today that he has secured a total of \$197,329 for enhancements to services in Rhode Island's Truancy Court. In a request made by Chafee to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, the Rhode Island Family Court will be the recipient of the funding, allocated by U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

The Family Court will use the funding to bolster the Truancy Court's ability to provide one-on-one mentoring and tutoring services to truant youth by giving the Court the capabilities to perform mental health evaluations. Senator Chafee has been a steadfast advocate for the Truancy Court, previously requesting and securing funds from the Appropriations Committee to help the Rhode Island Family Court launch the Truancy Court.

"The Truancy Court has had tremendous success because it has brought together all affected parties – the child, parents, schools, law enforcement, and social service agencies," Senator Chafee said. "Although I am thankful that the DOJ has provided some funding to the Court, more is needed and I hope the Committee will take a serious look at the effectiveness of this program when considering my funding request for fiscal year 2006. School truancy is a very powerful predictor of school failure and juvenile delinquency, and funding to enable the Court to add a mental health component to perform timely mental health evaluations, would only further its effectiveness. Currently, if a mental health evaluation is ordered by the Court, the juvenile may have to wait 4 to 8 weeks for an appointment, which greatly delays the Court's ability to address the child's issues."

The Truancy Court program provides constructive and intensive court supervision within the school setting for approximately 1,600 truant youth and their families. The Court now operates in 55 schools in 20 communities in Rhode Island, and over the last two years, an average of 80 percent of the children who were brought before the Court increased their attendance, and 63 percent showed an increase in academics.

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